

By intensely focusing on these two aspects of peace and coarseness, the preparatory stage that pertains to the Second Formless Level develops the ability to temporarily eliminate the nine types of mundane innate afflictions of the First Formless Level and thereby to attain the second formless absorptions. The same applies to the remaining two meditative absorptions of the Formless Realm.

Buddhist practitioners who have renunciation and who possess any of the meditative absorptions may *prior* to engaging in Buddhist practice or to generating renunciation have cultivated any of the absorptions in dependence on the above mentioned technique of generating the meditative awareness of the preparatory stage that perceives a lower level or a lower focal object to be coarse and a higher level or a higher focal object to be a state of peace.

However, if they cultivated any of the meditative absorptions in dependence on Buddhist training - in particular those who are on the Hinayana or Mahayana path - there are two methods of cultivating such absorptions and therefore of eliminating the innate afflictions that pertain to the different levels:

- (1) Cultivating any of the meditative absorptions in reliance on *mundane* uninterrupted paths
- (2) Cultivating any of the meditative absorptions in reliance on *supramundane* uninterrupted paths

(1) Cultivating any of the meditative absorptions in reliance on mundane uninterrupted paths:

Buddhist practitioners who have renunciation and who train in the attainment of, for instance, the first concentration, first cultivate the mundane preparatory stage of the first concentration (the first moment of which is marked by the first moment of calm abiding). The object of meditation of the uninterrupted paths of that preparatory stage is also called "bearer of the aspects of peace and coarseness".

Yet, it does not focus on the lower level (i.e. the Desire Realm) to be coarse and the higher level (i.e. the First Concentration Level) to be a state of peace but on the truths of suffering and the truths of origin (the former two of the four noble truths) to be coarse and the truths of cessation and the truths of the path (the latter two of the four noble truths) to be states of peace.

The same applies to the preparatory stages of the remaining three concentrations and the four formless absorptions; they all focus on the former two truths to be coarse and the latter two to be states of peace in order to temporarily remove whichever mundane innate afflictions prevent the arising of their respective absorptions.

(2) Cultivating any of the meditative absorptions in reliance on supramundane uninterrupted paths:

In the case of cultivating meditative absorptions in reliance on *supramundane* uninterrupted paths, such supramundane paths are uninterrupted paths of meditation that directly realize emptiness and gradually and irrevocably eliminate whichever mundane innate afflictions prevent the arising of any of the meditative absorptions. (This is explained in more detail below.)

Please note that a supramundane uninterrupted path in the continuum of a Hinayana Arya is either a preparatory stage of the first concentration or one of the first seven meditative absorptions. A supramundane uninterrupted path in the continuum of a Hinayana Arya cannot be an eighth formless absorption, since it is a meditative equipoise path and since (as mentioned above) a peak of cyclic existence absorption cannot serve as the mental basis of a Hinayanist's meditative equipoise path that directly realizes emptiness.

Also, there is no supramundane uninterrupted path that is a preparatory stage of the second, third, or fourth concentration, or of any of the four formless absorptions. The reason for this is that the preparatory stages of the second, third, or fourth concentration, or of any of the four formless absorptions can only arise once a person has at least attained the first concentration. But once he has attained the first concentration the mental basis of his meditative equipoise paths would be that first concentration, not one of the preparatory stages. This is because meditative absorptions are more adequate to serve as the mental bases of meditative equipoise paths directly realizing emptiness than preparatory stages.

As mentioned before, the only time when a preparatory stage (i.e. the preparatory stage of the first concentration) serves as the mental basis of a meditative equipoise path that directly realizes emptiness is when an Arya has not attained the first concentration yet.

Meditative absorption that is to be cultivated	NON-BUDDHISTS and BUDDHISTS who lack renunciation	BUDDHISTS who have attained renunciation	
	Object of meditation of the <i>mundane</i> uninterrupted paths that cause the attainment of the meditative absorption	Object of meditation of the <i>mundane</i> uninterrupted paths that cause the attainment of the meditative absorption	Object of meditation of the <i>supramundane</i> uninterrupted paths that cause the attainment of the meditative absorption
First concentration	The Desire Realm is coarse and the First Concentration Level is peace	The first two noble truths are coarse and the latter two noble truths are peace	Emptiness (lack of true existence)
Second concentration	The First Concentration Level is coarse and the Second Concentration Level is peace	The first two noble truths are coarse and the latter two noble truths are peace	Emptiness
Third concentration	The Second Concentration Level is coarse and the Third Concentration Level is peace	The first two noble truths are coarse and the latter two noble truths are peace	Emptiness
Fourth concentration	The Third Concentration Level is coarse and the Fourth Concentration Level is peace	The first two noble truths are coarse and the latter two noble truths are peace	Emptiness
Limitless Space	The focal object of the fourth concentration is coarse and the focal object of the limitless space level is peace	The first two noble truths are coarse and the latter two noble truths are peace	Emptiness
Limitless consciousness	The focal object of the limitless space absorption is coarse and the focal object of the limitless consciousness absorption is peace	The first two noble truths are coarse and the latter two noble truths are peace	Emptiness
Nothingness	The focal object of the limitless consciousness absorption is coarse and the focal object of the nothingness absorption is peace	The first two noble truths are coarse and the latter two noble truths are peace	Emptiness
Peak of cyclic existence	The focal object of the nothingness absorption is coarse and the focal object of the peak of cyclic existence Level is peace	The former two noble truths are coarse and the latter two noble truths are peace	Emptiness

Having gained some understanding of the different meditative absorptions, their cultivation, and so on, it is essential to understand how mundane uninterrupted paths and supramundane uninterrupted paths differ in the way they eliminate innate afflictions.

